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JIM CROW -- AND
HOW TO TREAT HIM

Like most outlaws, the notorious Jim Crow has some points that are commended among law-abiding citizens, but when he is a bad bird he is a hard-boiled egg. His springtime ravages on the cornfield are largely responsible for his unsavory reputation, but he has added to it by occasional raids on the poultry yard, depredations on wild birds, and attacks on crops other than corn. At certain seasons and in certain localities he becomes such a nuisance and a detriment to farming that he must be warned by making an example of some members of his gang.

Jim is only about half bad, and because of his better half, which does not mean his wife, who is just as black as he is, it is not advisable to treat him too harshly. Nearly one-fifth of his food is made up of insects, and he includes on his menu some of the farmer's worst enemies -- grasshoppers, caterpillars, and white grubs and their parents, the May beetles.

Probably we could not get along so well without Jim Crow as with him. Killing off the whole family, if that were possible, would be a shortsighted policy. So, when the United States Department of Agriculture recommends the poisoning of crows, this measure should be looked upon merely as a warning to Jim and his family that they have been going too far and that they can't get away with everything. They are wary enough not to need many repetitions of the lesson, at least not in one season.

Every spring farmers revive their old feud with the Jim Crow family, carrying on a desultory battle by means of scarecrows, epithets, and the more effective deterrents of coal tar and poison. Coal tar, which may be secured at gas plants and some paint shops, is not a poison, but it imparts a disagreeable gassy odor to the seed grain that is distasteful to crows and other pests. It has the advantage, not possessed by some other deterrents on the market, of not affecting the germination of the corn when used in limited quantities. A

tablespoonful is used to a half bushel of seed. The grain is first heated by an application of warm water, and then drained. The coal tar is added immediately and a thorough stirring will give each kernel an even coating. The seed is then spread out to dry or is dried by the addition of sifted ashes, land plaster, or powdered earth.

The best deterrent, however, is strychnine, which may be applied to corn in a paste made up in the proportion of 1 ounce of powdered strychnine, 2 tablespoonfuls of starch, and 1 1/2 pints of water to 20 quarts of corn. The starch and strychnine are put into the water, which is heated to boiling, and stirred well when the starch begins to thicken. This paste is poured on the corn and stirred into it until thoroughly distributed. The corn is spread to dry and is then ready to use. This method is better than the old one of steeping the corn in a strong strychnine solution. Because of their wariness it will not be possible to kill many of the crows, but a little of this poisoned corn scattered over the field of sprouting corn will get a few of them and the rest will take the warning and leave. Using whole corn for bait lessens the danger of poisoning smaller seed-eating birds. Care should be taken not to distribute the poisoned grain near the farm buildings where domestic animals might pick it up. The crows usually do their corn pulling at some distance from the buildings.

Before going ahead with poisoning operations which involve the spreading of poison it is always advisable to look up laws and local regulations regarding the distribution of poison. Local conditions may modify practices a great deal, especially in thickly populated regions.